

*"For safety's sake—do something."*

## Can You Hear Me Now?

**Hearing Loss:** Heredity, aging, and exposure to loud noises are the main factors that contribute to hearing loss. Chronic exposure to high levels of noise can cause permanent hearing loss that cannot be reversed. Much of the hearing loss suffered later in life is related to damage caused at a younger age. Now is the time to prevent and protect.

- Mild:** You may hear some speech sounds, but will have difficulty with soft sounds.
- Moderate:** You will struggle to hear / understand speech when someone is talking at a normal level.
- Profound:** You may only hear very loud sounds and no speech at all.
- Severe:** You will hear little-to-no speech at normal levels, and hear only some loud sounds.

**Headphones and Earbuds:** Keep the volume turned down and / or limit the time duration of use. If you can hear the sound being delivered into a person's ear via headphones or earphones, the sound is too loud. Permanent hearing loss is likely to occur.

**Prevent and Protect:** The first line of defense against hearing loss is to reduce the noise at the source. That can be accomplished by engineering controls such as sound proofing or selecting low-noise generating tools / machinery. Administrative controls can provide protection by limiting the level and time for noise exposure. Hearing Protection Devices (HPDs), such as ear plugs and ear muffs, are an acceptable way to prevent hearing loss, although less desirable.

**Other Health Concerns:** Studies have shown that exposure to high noise levels has been associated with non-hearing related health problems, such as increased pulse rate, high blood pressure, muscle tension, sleeplessness, and fatigue.

Visit the [NIOSH Noise and Hearing Loss Prevention website](#) for guidelines and recommendations for employers and workers to help reduce noise exposure.

**What is Loud?** The chart below provides a few examples of noise sources and their typical sound levels for reference. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommends that worker exposure to noise should be controlled below a level of 85 dB to minimize noise-induced hearing loss. Firearms, fireworks, snowmobiles, chain saws, motorcycles, and vacuum cleaners are just a few common items that generate sounds that will damage our hearing.

**Typical A-weighted Sound Levels**  
(dB, re; 20 µPA)

